

MACAULAY'S THIRD CHAPTER

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instruction and the books which furnished them with their literary nutriment, it was easy to pass to a discussion of the state of education, literature, and science. But instead of ending his chapter with this picture of the English mind, Macaulay turns back to survey once more the economic condition of England, and winds up by describing the condition of the working classes, the rate of wages, pauperism, the comparative well-being of the lower orders in 1685^{anc^} 1848, and the moral and material benefits which civilisation brings in its train for all classes of the people.

The preamble and the peroration of the chapter explain the reasons which dictated its arrangement. In them he sets forth his philosophy of history. The constant progress of physical knowledge and the constant desire of every man to better himself explain the uninterrupted progress of England in wealth during the last six centuries. This progress became portentously rapid about the middle of the eighteenth century and proceeded with accelerated velocity during the nineteenth : * A change to which the history of the old world furnishes no parallel has taken place in our country/ * To bring out the greatness of this change by * placing before the English of the nineteenth century a true picture of the life of their ancestors ' was the

subject of chapter iii, and of the History as a whole.

Therefore he begins the chapter by showing how thinly inhabited and how poor compared to its neighbours England was then, and contrasts continually the small things of 1685 and the great things of 1848. The peroration of the chapter is intended to prove that the progress of wealth and civilisation has benefited the whole people, and in some ways benefited the poorest class of it most. Macaulay was not unaware of the discontent which existed amongst

*1,272.